

## **Low Birth Weight & Very Low Birth Weight Fact Sheet**

**Definition:** Low birth weight infants weigh less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces (2500 grams) at birth while the very low birth weight infant weigh less than 3 pounds, 5 ounces (1500 grams) at birth.

### Healthy People 2010 Goal:

- To reduce the low birth weight babies to 5% of the total live births.
- To reduce the very low birth weight to 0.9% of to total live births.

### Consequences:

- Low birth weight babies may face serious health problems as newborns, and are at increased risk of long-term disabilities.

### Causes:

- Women under 17 or over 35, unmarried mothers and women who have had a previous preterm birth, women who experience excessive stress and victims of domestic violence or other abuse also may be at increased risk of having a low birth weight baby.
- Socioeconomic factors such as low income and lack of education also are associated with increased risk of having a low birth weight baby, although the underlying reasons for this are not well understood.

### Prevalence in Indiana:

- In 2002, the overall, white and black low birth weight percentages are 7.8, 7.2 and 12.8, respectively.
- In 2002, the overall very low birth weight in Indiana was 1.4% of the total live births.
- Although black infants births comprises of 10.9% of the total births in Indiana in 2002, it represents 18.5% of the overall low birth weight infants.
- Black infants are approximately two times more likely to be born at low or very low birth weights than the overall population.

### Trends towards reaching Healthy People 2010 goals:

- Over the last four years, there is a slight decrease in overall and white low and very low birth weight percentages. The black low birth weight percentage remained the same while black very low birth weight percentage decreased considerably.
- Though there is a favorable trend, it is very unlikely that Indiana will reach the low birth weight or very low birth weight Healthy People 2010 goals.

Low Birth Weight and Very Low Birth Weight, 1999 and 2002, Indiana						
Year	1999	2002		Year	1999	2002
Low Birth Weight Percentage	7.8%	7.6%		Very Low Birth weight Percentage	1.5%	1.4%
White	7.2%	6.9%		White	1.3%	1.2%
Black	12.9%	12.9%		Black	3.1%	2.6%

**Source:** Indiana Natality Report, 1999-2002. Indiana State Department of Health  
**Foot Notes:** Percentages are calculated using total births in each age group or age group/race category.